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Headquarters, United States Central Command

Activation of the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) on January 1, 1983 marked a major milestone in the evolution of the United States' military relationship with nations in Southwest Asia, the Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa.

It brought to fruition a major change to the unified command structure which was developed soon after the end of World War II. This change provided a new theater command to better serve U.S. interests and security concerns of friendly states in SWA, the Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa, which is collectively referred to as the "central area."

When the unified command structure was created at the end of World War II, it was not possible to foresee the significant security and economic issues that would develop and focus attention on the area in the 1980's. Consequently, the boundary between the U.S. European Command and the Pacific Command cut directly through the region.

With the establishment of the U.S. Central Command, however, the unified command structure has been changed to provide a single U.S. command with responsibility for essentially all U.S. military activity within this critical region, including military planning, exercises involving U.S. and regional forces, administration of security assistance, and other representational activities.

One of the principal advantages of having a single unified command for the region is that all nations will have only one U.S. command to deal with on most security issues. And the new command will be able to ensure that all U.S. security activity in that area is fully coordinated.

To ease the transition and to ensure these important programs continue to be managed properly, the U.S. Central Command will work closely with the European Command and the Pacific Command. This is especially true of USCENTCOM's security assistance responsibilities for the region, which the new command will assume in the fall of 1983.

In order to understand why the U.S. Central Command has been established, it is necessary to review the recent history of the region.

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At the end of World War II, there was little United States military focus on the central area. This stemmed from the fact that the United Kingdom was capably representing western interests in the area and significant British forces were present.

After the withdrawal of the United Kingdom's forces from east of Suez in the late 1960's and early 1970's, American involvement, and attention to the region grew more rapidly. U.S. influence there began to increase particularly in Iran.

Late in 1979, however, two events fundamentally changed the balance of power in the central area: the Iranian revolution and the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan.

As the decade of the 1970's drew to a close, it was clear that the stabilizing influence of Iran had disappeared with the revolution. It was also clear that there was no counterbalancing military force in the area to assist in maintaining regional stability and safeguarding free world interests.

Moreover, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan provided tangible evidence that the Soviet Union would not hesitate to use military force in the region if doing so contributed to longstanding Soviet ambitions and if there were no serious potential for effective opposition.

Historically, the Soviet Union has demonstrated a serious desire to expand into the region. Russia, for example, has invaded Persian territory five times during the past 300 years--twice in this century alone.

The fact that Soviet military forces continue to occupy Afghanistan in considerable strength makes the Soviet Union a formidable force in the central area. There is no military force in the region with more combat power.

One of the key reasons the United States needs a new unified command is to provide a focal point for combined efforts to meet any threat posed to the region. The establishment of the new command provides a means to satisfy that responsibility.

It is clear that the United States and its friends and allies have significant interests in the central area.

In addressing those interests, there is a tendency to link the existence of the Central Command to oil as the absolute, overriding consideration.

In fact, U.S. national interests in the central area go well beyond simply insuring a continued flow of oil.

Formation of USCENTCOM as a new theater command provides recognition that the United States has strong diplomatic, economic and security interests and many close ties with nations of the region. The U.S. wants to strengthen those ties, and the Central Command is intended to help do that.

Establishment of a new command that can respond to security issues underscores the importance of nations of the region to the United States. It also serves to reinforce the message that the United States is committed to help those nations deter and resist aggression.

Another key reason for the existence of the U.S. Central Command is to help preserve the autonomy of states of the region.

The primary mission of the new command is to deter aggression and to protect U.S. interests in Southwest Asia. Virtually everything the command does is related to providing a credible capability that serves as a deterrent to armed confrontation in the region.

The United States works closely with many nations of the central area to help them achieve and maintain regional security. Until they are able to do so, the U.S. will continue to support their security needs by ensuring that U.S. forces are capable of efficiently responding to their needs, if requested.

Formation of the U.S. Central Command is a clear signal of the long-term resolve of the United States to help promote stability and peace in the region. Implicit in this is U.S. recognition that the issues are complex and that the key to improved security rests chiefly with the nations of the area.

U.S. security interests in the central area are inseparably tied to those of the region and are based on three dimensions of capability:

- What each friendly nation of the region can do with its own military forces if threatened;
- What it can do when the military forces of its regional friends and allies are added; and
- What assistance the United States can provide in concert with regional forces, if the U.S. were asked to assist.

Because of the command's association with the region, it is already attuned to a total regional approach, is sensitive to its hosts' political climate, and is aware of U.S. military capabilities and limitations.

The U.S. Central Command is building the necessary expertise--both in the region and in military systems--to assist friendly nations as required. Moreover, as security assistance and military sales programs develop new capabilities for these nations, the Central Command will be in a position to recommend appropriate adjustments to U.S. assistance.

While USCENTCOM is responsible for essentially all U.S. military activity in the central area, the U.S. ambassador remains the senior U.S. official in each country. All significant USCENTCOM actions affecting a host country will be coordinated with or approved by the U.S. ambassador in order to ensure that U.S. political, military, economic and social actions are consistent and complementary.

Although it would be useful for the new command to place a limited number of headquarters personnel in the area, there is no desire or intention to station large numbers of U.S. forces there. The advantage of a small headquarters element, however, is that it would enhance USCENTCOM's ability to provide timely response to a variety of requests from nations in the area.

Should it become necessary for the United States to assist its friends in the central area, the new command will use forces based primarily in the United States. Some military equipment and supplies, however, may be prepositioned in or near the region.

How does the new command differ from the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF)?

The RDJTF was created to provide the United States a military organization which could put together a four-service fighting force, train it, and deploy and employ it in areas outside NATO and the Republic of Korea.

From its inception--March 1, 1980--the RDJTF had its focus on Southwest Asia, the Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa. The force was just over a year old when the Department of Defense announced that it would transition to unified command status.

The Department of Defense stated on April 24, 1981 that the RDJTF would become a unified command with its own geographic responsibilities, service components, forces, intelligence, communications, logistics facilities and other support elements. The plan was to have one single unified commander responsible for all aspects of U.S. military planning and operations in the central area.

The Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force only focused on the region for planning, joint training, exercises and deployment/employment of designated forces. Now, the U.S.

Central Command has been assigned a specific geographic area with firm boundaries and full responsibility for that area. Also, the new command's role in security assistance programs will give it increased flexibility both to deter aggression and assist friendly nations in other ways.

The genesis, purpose and role of USCENTCOM may have elements which can be found in other military units but, in the final analysis, the U.S. Central Command is a unique entity.

First, it is a command that is not part of any formal alliance such as NATO, and there are no treaties governing its role. Nevertheless, the command expects considerable assistance from allies and friends inside as well as outside the region to support any contingency operations. Depending upon the circumstances, the support might range from political assistance through the granting of overflight rights to the commitment of military forces and combined operations.

Another unique feature of USCENTCOM is that its headquarters and military forces are not located within the theater. Because it has no forward land-based forces, USCENTCOM--working with the U.S. Readiness Command and the Joint Deployment Agency--has a capability to assemble forces and deploy them on short notice. In effect, the forces use an "over the horizon" projection and contingency concept. They would arrive only after being invited and depart as soon as possible after their job was done.

USCENTCOM is the headquarters which has both the task of developing contingency plans and implementing the plans, if required.

These two facets of the command are the primary factors responsible for the size of the new headquarters staff. A headquarters which may have to deploy and provide all the in-theater command and control in executing its own contingency plans must of necessity have a wide range of capability and support.

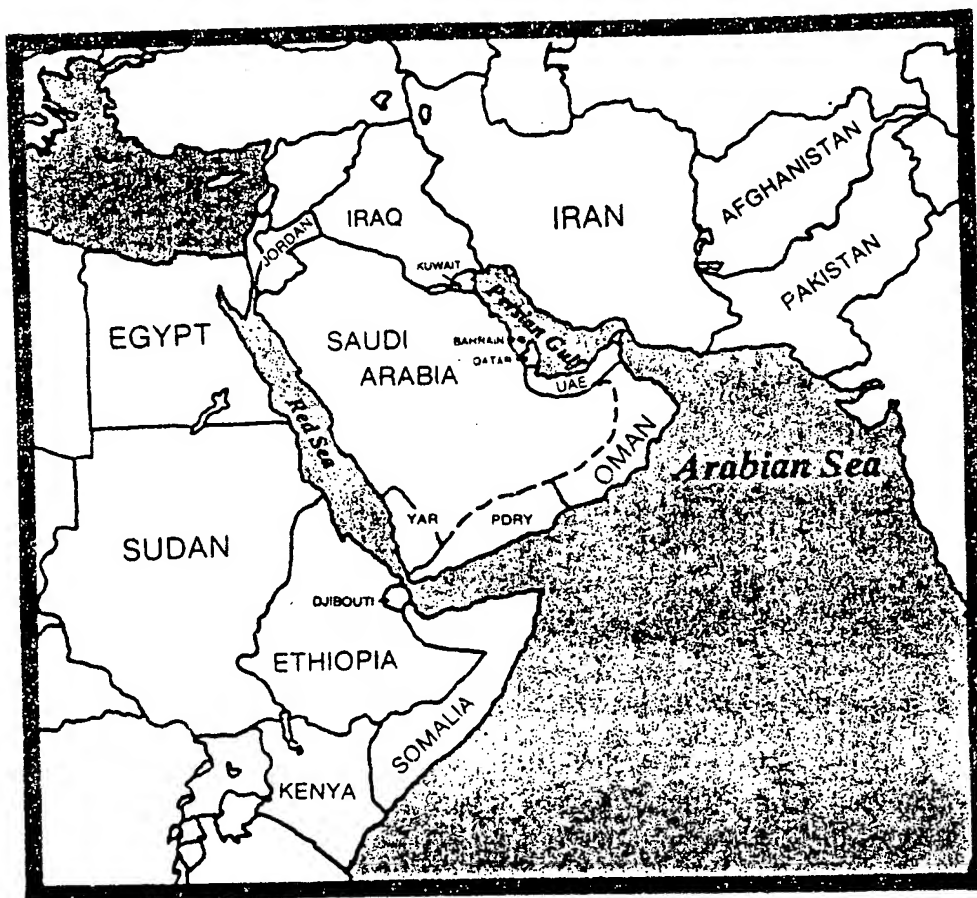
USCENTCOM is also unique in that other unified commands generally have, in place, the principal communications facilities, support facilities, supplies and equipment to sustain their forces. It is a fact of USCENTCOM existence that if the command must deploy it will have to move almost all of those assets thousands of miles to the theater of operations.

As it takes its place alongside other U.S. unified commands, the U.S. Central Command is a new, unique and important part of the U.S. military structure.

The U.S. Central Command has a heritage of accomplishment dating back to March 1, 1980, when the original Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force was formed. Further, it has developed excellent

rapport with the military services, unified commands, and other major commands on which it is so dependent for its support.

Finally, USCENTCOM's establishment is a signal to friends and potential adversaries of the importance that the United States places on the freedom, independence and right of self-determination of the peoples in the central area.



USCINCCENT'S ASSIGNED AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY includes all states on the Arabian Peninsula south of the northern borders of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait; the countries of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan on the Middle East landmass; Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya on the Horn of Africa; and the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.